

Provo Canyon Resorts, Picnic Sites & Summer Home Sites.

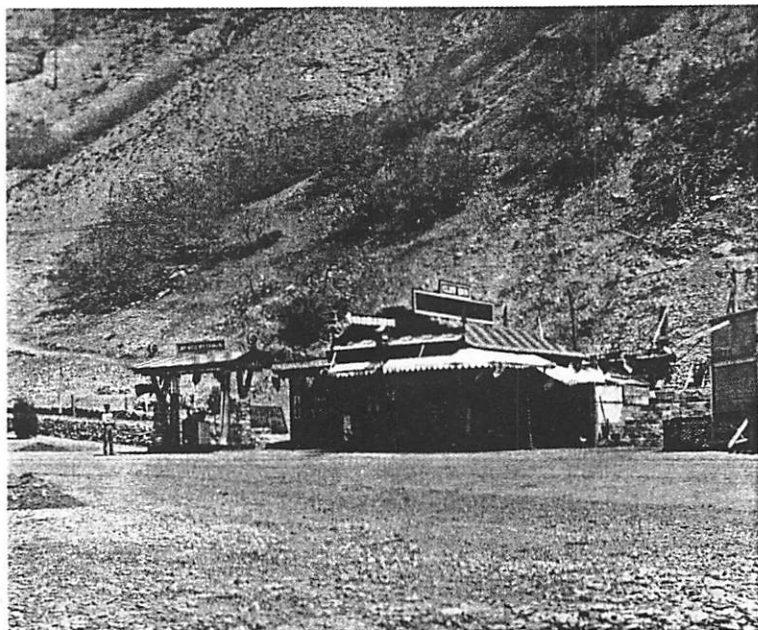
If you were driving up Provo Canyon earlier this century, the first business or stopping place you would come to would have been the **Cliff Inn**. It was a Shell gas station located right where the east end of 800 North of Orem meets the main highway running into the canyon from Provo. It was just across the road from the Hale Steam Power Plant. This service station was built by Y.M. Offret back in about 1920, but he never owned the place. It was owned by Shell Oil Co., who leased it to Offret and others. Later, Offret was offered a job at Wildwood in 1929, so he moved there to run another gas station until he died in 1967.

Part of the facility was dug into the limestone cliff, thus the name **Cliff Inn**. The Offret family actually had their bedrooms under ground. Inside, was a small store with pinball machines, punch boards, slot machines, a snack bar and lunch counter. They did some cooking for a simple menu. To one side of the station, Offret built a small miniature model of Hoover Dam, complete with water, as a promotion. In later years, the cliff began to crumble, so the place was taken down some time in the 1950's.

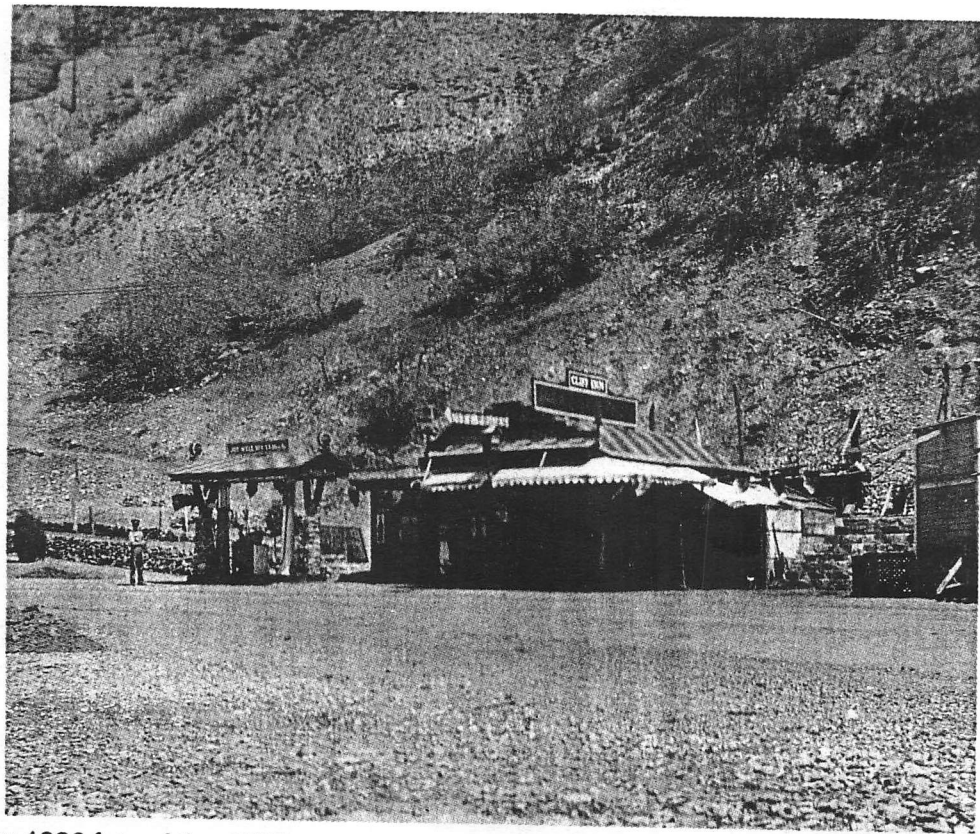
Up-stream around a couple of bends from the mouth of the canyon and just down-stream from the present-day Murdock Diversion Dam, was a gas station and bar called **Christmas City**. It's still listed on some of the 1950's USGS maps. In March 1938, a man by the name of Mel Close bought about 16 hectares(40 acres) there along the river bottom from a man named Butler. In the summer of 1938 he built a small hamburger stand which the family called **Whimpy's Inn**. Mel's son, Wayne Close, operated the stand that summer when he was 15 years old. Wayne, who is the source of this information, slept in a tent behind the stand.

In 1939, Mel Close began building a gas station, restaurant, bar and dance hall all under one roof. The place was called **Christmas City**. The gas station end of the business was part of the Gilmore Oil Company, owned in part by Mel Close and others. At one time this small outfit had about half a dozen stations in northern Utah. Behind this *beer joint* as some called it, was a small two room cabin where members of the Close family lived part time. Some of the trees they planted are still there today. The place had kind of a bad reputation, partly because Mel used to operate slot machines in the bar, and the police would occasionally raid the place and close it down.

The Close family never did actually run **Christmas City**, instead they leased it out to others. A couple by the name of Harry and Benny managed it for several years during World War II. In February, 1946, Elden Price bought the place. As it turned out, **Christmas City** burned to the ground in the

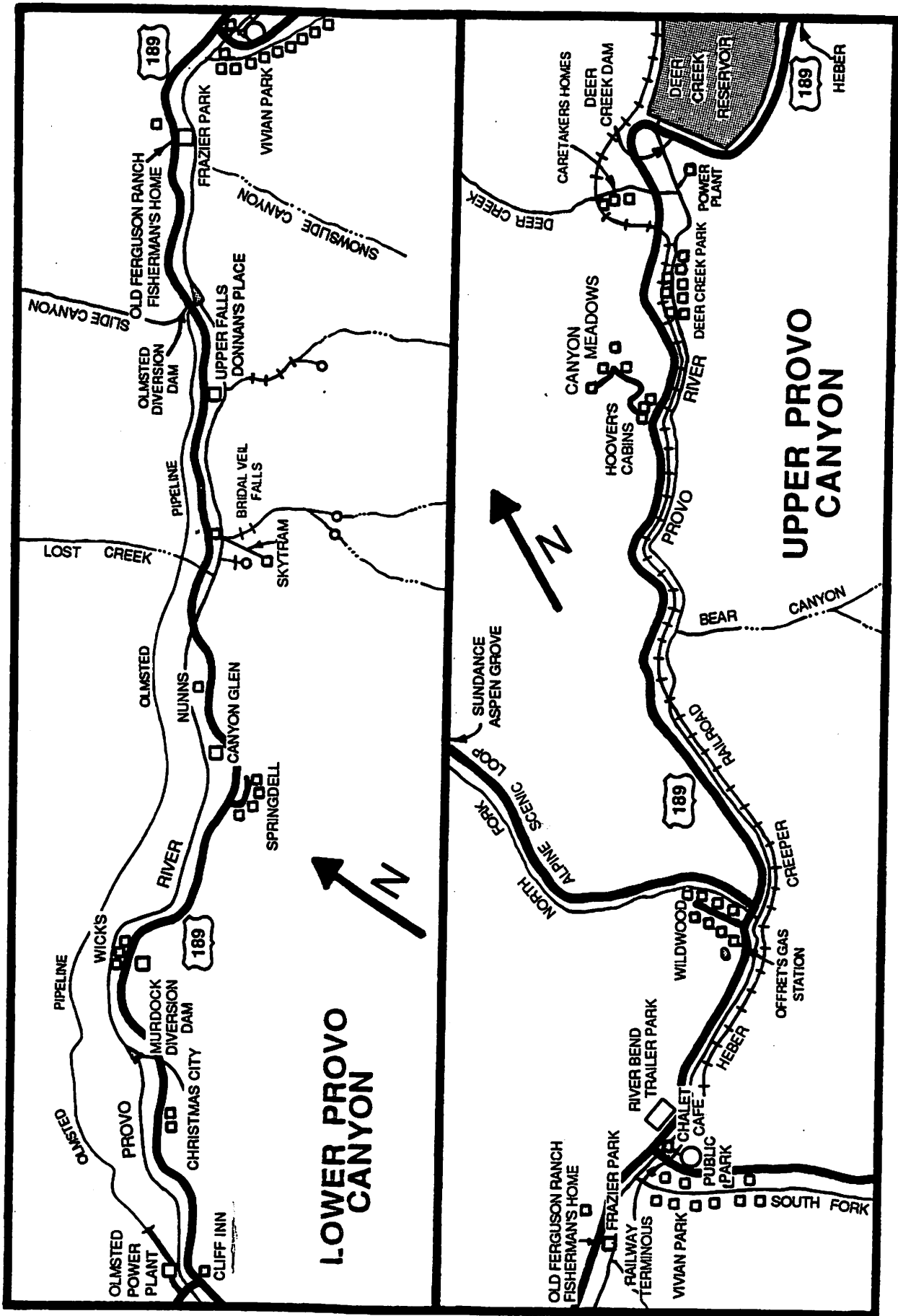


A May 1932 foto of the Cliff Inn at the lower end of Provo Canyon(Bertha McKean Offret foto)



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PROVO CANYON RECREATION AND HISTORIC SITES THEN AND NOW



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